

REMARKS

Claims 1-11 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1, 2 and 5-8 are amended. Claim 11 is added to recite additional features disclosed in the specification at, for example, page 12, lines 12-17.

Reconsideration of the application in light of the foregoing claim amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-10 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Claims 1, 2 and 5-8 are amended for better clarity. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-10 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-10 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over JP-A-2001-300922 ("JP-922") in view of either U.S. Patent No. 4,740,408 to Mochida et al. ("Mochida"), U.S. Patent No. 4,810,554 to Hattori et al. ("Hattori"), or U.S. Patent No. 6,159,431 to Inoue et al. ("Inoue"), and/or further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,557,773 to Bonzo ("Bonzo"). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

The Office Action acknowledges that JP-922 does not disclose or suggest drilling holes . . . by use of the at least one reference cell as a reference point, as recited in claim 1. However, the Office Action observes that Mochida, Hattori and Inoue each disclose differently shaped cells. The Office Action then asserts that those differently shaped cells are "obviously used as reference cells for providing reference points for drilling holes." See the Office Action, at page 4, line 21 - page 5, line 3; and at page 6, the last paragraph.

However, the Office Action's assertion is baseless. The applied references do not disclose or suggest using a different-shaped reference cell for providing a reference point for drilling holes, and it is conclusory, and evidently based on impermissible use of hindsight knowledge gained from Applicants' disclosure, to assert that such would have been obvious in view of these references.

In particular, Mochida discloses cells 4 with fins 3. See Fig. 1. As acknowledged in the Office Action, the fins 3 are used only to eliminate the occurrence of accelerated deterioration of the central body portion which tends to hamper efficient purification of combustion gas. See col. 3, lines 1-48. Mochida does not disclose or suggest that the cells with fins are used as reference points for drilling holes.

Hattori discloses a structure in which the shape of the holes in the central part is different from those at the periphery. See Figs. 4 and 5, and col. 2, line 62 - col. 3, line 20. As admitted in the Office Action, such a configuration is only to strengthen the ceramic honeycomb. Hattori does not disclose or suggest using any of the cells as a reference cell.

Inoue discloses a ceramic honeycomb having two zones, with one of the two zones having a reinforcement portion on each corner part of an open-ended cell. See Figs. 1 and 2, and col. 3, lines 12-42. As acknowledged in the Office Action, such a reinforcement portion is merely for sufficient mechanical strength. Inoue does not disclose or suggest using cells of a particular shape as reference cells.

The Office Action asserts that the applied references "obviously" disclose using reference cells as reference points. However, as discussed above, the applied references do not disclose or suggest that cells of a different shape are used as reference points. In fact, the Office Action fails to indicate where in the applied references, it is believed that the applied references disclose or suggest the "obvious" use of cells of different shape as a reference point.

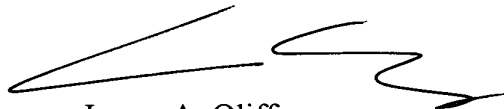
For at least the above reasons, Mochida, Hattori, and Inoue do not disclose or suggest the use of a reference cell for drilling holes. In addition, Bonzo does not disclose or suggest drilling holes by use of a reference cell as a reference point. Thus, Bonzo does not supply the subject matter lacking in JP-922, Mochida, Hattori and Inoue. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-10 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is respectfully requested.

New claim 11 is believed to be patentable over the applied references at least in view of the patentability of claim 1, from which it depends, as well as for additional features it recites. For example, the applied references do not disclose or suggest identifying the at least one reference cell from an image, and determining a position of the at least one reference cell from the image, as recited in claim 11.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachment:
Petition for Extension of Time

Date: January 3, 2006

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